

Report on the 4th European Vocal Pedagogy Week

Ljubljana (Slovenia), 20-26 February 2011

The 4th European Vocal Pedagogy Week was held in Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, on 20-26 February 2011. It was organized by the European Voice Teachers Association (EVTA) as part of the LEO2 project (Leonardo da Vinci Lifelong Learning Programme). The project is called "Digital Resources in Vocal Pedagogy" and 8 EVTA member countries take part in it (Austria, Croatia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Slovenia and Poland). In addition participants came from UK, Norway and Latvia. The project consists of a number of meetings in the form of training sessions, pedagogical workshops and conferences for voice teachers from all over Europe. Subsequent meetings take part in different cities located in LEO2 partner countries.

What is new and significant in the project is discovering new possibilities and vistas in the development of modern European vocal pedagogy – namely the use of digital resources such as computer software, the Internet, digital databases and state-of-the-art digital technology in voice teaching.

This refers both to classical music and CCM. It is worth mentioning that the 4th European Vocal Pedagogy Week, held under the motto "Building Bridges", encompassed also experience exchange between voice teachers representing different kinds of singing instruction. This exchange of pedagogical experiences between classical singing and popular singing worlds consisted in a search for common features and differences in teaching methods, discussions after the lectures, and pedagogical experiments: teaching one another and teaching Slovenian students during practical training sessions and workshops. Classes took place at Ljubljana's music school.

The EVPW4 was attended by 34 voice teachers from 11 countries (only Iceland had no representative). Of course, Slovenia had the largest representation, but also Germany, Austria, France and Croatia sent large delegations.

The 4th European Vocal Pedagogy Week agenda abounded in lectures, practical training sessions and summing-up meetings. Morning sessions (9 a.m. – 1 p.m.), which started every day with a warm-up and singing together Slovenian songs, consisted of lectures on the basics concerning different types of software (including software for voice analysis) and the use of playback material etc., workshops teaching how to apply the software, experiments with teaching each other (e.g. a classical singer performed a popular song, and a pop singer performed a classical song), and discussion meetings on the development of modern vocal pedagogy with the use of digital technology and resources. Afternoon sessions (3 p.m. – 6 p.m.) were more flexible as practical training sessions and workshops took place simultaneously in several rooms. Their program sometimes changed and was hard to predict:). During

afternoon sessions their participants had an opportunity to practically test what they had learned during morning sessions, they also could take part in “refreshing classes”, i.e. study singing with a teacher of their own choice or be instructed how to look for, install and use Internet resources (such as digital sheet music libraries and collections, playback material databases, or music transposition software). Sometimes the participants sang together arias and songs with the use of on-line playback (for example from YouTube) or CD playback.

From 7 p.m. one could take part in evening sessions during which those interested in distance vocal education could learn how to do that through video conferences or Skype. There were also evaluation sessions during which advantages and disadvantages of previous activities were discussed and plans for the following days made.

On Thursday evening, 24th February, a LEO2 partnership working and report meeting was held, attended by representatives of the partner countries.

On Friday, 25th February, during the morning session, selected participants acquainted the attendees with their achievements, discussed their research work and presented their current and completed research and artistic projects. Izabela Jeżowska took part in this Research Forum, talking about her habilitation thesis (“Performance stylistics of songs by George Gershwin based on the Gershwin style and its exemplification in selected songs”).

Although there was very little leisure time, participants had an opportunity to attend concerts (an opening concert by Slovenian teachers and a closing concert by students at the school, as well as a concert by the Slovenian Radio and Television Symphony Orchestra). There was also a welcome reception at the school of music and a farewell dinner at the Castle.

Summing up the Ljubljana meeting it should be underlined that a lot of innovative actions had been initiated, a number of original subjects were discussed which cannot be ignored by us – voice teachers of today; we cannot pretend that technological progress and digital technology do not concern us. It is true that our field of art is very specific because of the individual treatment of each student, and the direct contact and the “master/disciple” relationship cannot be replaced by classes via the Internet. But we should learn how to profit from information technology, computer software, digital resources and on-line databases. How to use them consciously and how to skillfully separate what is important from “spam”. And if we combine this knowledge with vocal traditions and intuition and put them on a solid foundation of vocal technique, effects can be astonishing

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